

My name is Dee Sanchez from Norwalk, CT and I would like you to know the affect that a Family Resource Center had in my and my 4 kids' lives. I am sorry I could not be here in person today, but my responsibilities as a worker and a mother prevented it. So here is my story:

In 2011, right before Hurricane Irene hit, a staff member from our FRC appeared at my door. She handed me an application for a fall preschool spot for my youngest daughter who was three. I had participated in the Parents As Teachers program at the FRC with both of my daughters and the staff member had been encouraging me to enroll my youngest in a quality preschool. The staff member urged me not to delay as it was late August and she knew the available preschool slot would not last. "Get down there as soon as the storm is over," she urged.

At the time, I was working at a gym, not making much money and having trouble making ends meet, but I was able to bring my youngest to work with me, why would I want to change?

Reluctantly, I filled out the application and when everything reopened after the storm, I visited the preschool and enrolled my daughter. It was a difficult decision for me, but after a few weeks my daughter seemed well adjusted and happy. I began to question why I needed to remain in a low paying job.

I now had reliable childcare, so I applied and got another job at almost twice the amount of money. The following year I was able to move my family out of public housing to a private apartment, a goal I had had for a long time.

While it is still difficult to raise 4 kids on my own, my children are happier, my baby is now in the third grade and is reading on grade level, which I attribute to her preschool experience. She is still involved in the FRC, taking classes after school and participating in a Girls Only program. Occasionally, I also get free passes to the local Stepping Stones Children's Museum through the FRC.

My older boys also benefitted from the FRC. Both received scholarships to row with a local rowing organization on the Norwalk River when they were in middle school. The FRC Director, knowing my family situation connected me with the club. Without the FRC, my boys would never have had this amazing opportunity.

I tell people now that the FRC was the push that got the ball rolling for my family.

Please keep funding FRCs so that other families like mine may benefit. Thank you.